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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: THE GARCIA-HUMALA DEBATE: THE TWO TALK PAST EACH
OTHER TO THEIR TARGET AUDIENCES

REF: A. LIMA 1974

[B](#). LIMA 1887
[C](#). LIMA 1852

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) APRA's Alan Garcia and Union por el Peru's (UPP) Ollanta Humala talked past one another in their 5/21 "debate," aiming their presentations at separate target audiences. Garcia, addressing the fifty percent of the population who did not vote for either run-off finalist, sought to portray himself as an elder statesman who stands for "responsible change" and has learned from his prior mistakes. Humala concentrated on his base of support among Peru's marginalized majority, starting off by combatively challenging the debate format and the legitimacy of Peruvian democracy, and proceeding through an assemblage of populist declarations and accusations of misgovernment and corruption by Garcia's 1985-90 administration. Garcia countered effectively at times, trying to link Humala to imprisoned former national security advisor Vladimiro Montesinos as well as to Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Fidel Castro, but Humala scored points too, particularly by highlighting the APRA candidate's failure to state a clear position on the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. or on whether he would pardon Montesinos. Two polls of Lima residents the day after found that most thought Garcia had "won" the debate, but it does not appear that the contest will change many voters' minds.
END SUMMARY.

HUMALA'S PRE-SHOW THEATRICALS

[1](#)2. (U) The debate started nearly 20 minutes late due to Humala's tardiness. Though Humala claimed that his arrival was delayed by APRA supporters, journalists observed that he was dropped off five blocks from the debate site at the National Archeological and Anthropological Museum and, in the course of a leisurely walk, he chose to stop off at a store to buy water. His arrival at the museum led to a mob scene with the press, which caused further delay. Upon reaching the podium Humala, dressed in an open-necked shirt and jacket (sans tie), placed a small Peruvian flag on the podium.

Additional time was consumed as the moderator, "Peru 21" editor Alvaro Augusto Rodrich, insisted that both podiums be kept equally free of decorations. When Humala refused to remove the flag himself, the moderator did so.

THE CANDIDATES' DIFFERENT APPROACHES

13. (SBU) When the debate finally began, it soon became clear that the two candidates were taking completely different approaches. Garcia, who seemed to be addressing the fifty percent of the population who voted for candidates other than the two run-off finalists, sought to portray himself as an elder statesman who stands for "responsible change" and has learned from his prior mistakes. His presentation concentrated on providing concrete examples as to how an APRA government would address the five topics chosen for discussion (democracy/human rights, economic policy, social policy/anti-corruption, decentralization, citizen security), all the while preaching cooperation with other political parties.

14. (SBU) Humala, on the other hand, made a confrontational appeal to his disaffected base amongst Peru's marginalized majority. He opened his first presentation by questioning the legitimacy of Peru's current democracy, claiming that it was controlled by powerful domestic economic interests and transnational companies. By the time his closing statement came about, Humala (Humala who is less experienced as a speaker than Garcia) substituted volume for passion and shouted out a list of his commitments: setting a public example of austerity, overturning the 1993 Constitution, calling for a constitutional assembly, fighting corruption,

reclaiming natural resources for the state, and promoting Latin American integration. He concluded by awkwardly exclaiming his full name as if he were declaiming a proclamation.

THE THRUST AND COUNTERTHRUST

15. (U) Both candidates went after the other though no more so than is characteristic of U.S. Presidential debates. Humala questioned Garcia's integrity (citing a corruption prosecution that was foreclosed by the statute of limitations), the APRA candidate's prior government (reading from a World Bank report blaming some 17,000 infant deaths on the economic crisis brought about by Garcia's policies), and his cronies (imprisoned former Interior Minister Agustin Mantilla). Humala also addressed Montesinos' recent claims that Humala's 2000 uprising was designed as a smokescreen to assist in the former national security advisor's escape (Septel) by turning it on its head, insisting that this demonstrated that Montesinos favored his opponent, and challenging Garcia to promise not/not to pardon Montesinos. (Comment: Given Garcia's weak record as President from 1985-90, it was in fact surprising that Humala did not make more of that experience. End Comment.)

16. (U) Garcia, as noted, took a more calculating approach, ignoring most of Humala's charges and waiting for openings. Thus, when Humala asked Garcia whether he would liberate Montesinos, the APRA candidate responded that Humala had already done so via his 2000 "uprising," but Garcia did not/not reply to Humala's pointed question as to whether he would issue a pardon if elected. Garcia countered Humala's attacks on his government (which were not followed up by the UPP candidate) by responding to the Comandante that most of Peru's problems are due to the fact that it has been governed for most of the past fifty years by military officers, adding that a prosperous future depended upon democratic, not authoritarian, leaders. In addition, Garcia sought to tie Humala to the Chavez-Morales-Castro axis, as well as to Humala's brother Antauro's 2005 armed uprising in Andahuaylas, which resulted in the death of four policemen

(Ref C).

POSITIONS ON THE ISSUES

17. (U) The debate was organized around five themes: democracy, governability, and human rights; economic policy and fight against poverty; social policy and anti-corruption; decentralization; and citizen security. Candidates took turns on the issues with a 3 minute presentation, 2 minute rebuttal, and one minute closing time each. There presentations can be summarized as follows:

Democracy, governability, and human rights:

-- Garcia called for a new democracy that respects freedom and resists authoritarianism. He identified economic growth and investment as central to this democracy and noted that a constitutional assembly was not necessary.

-- Humala said that Peru's current democracy does not/not represent the majority of Peruvians, and is beholden to domestic economic interests and transnational companies. He added that governability does not equate with social peace and that a majority of Peruvians were preoccupied with a lack of basic necessities (electricity and water). Humala called for a new constitution, a new democracy, and a re-distribution of power. He also called for implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Economic policy and poverty:

-- Garcia said economic and social growth were necessary to transform Peru into a first world country and surpass Chile. He proposed building a mega-port in the south, promoting natural gas, increasing agricultural exports with help from an agricultural bank, and developing commerce, especially in

the southern departments. Garcia also advocated for strict adherence to legal requirements for overtime pay and respect for labor rights. He emphasized the need for foreign investment, warning that otherwise these funds and technology would be snapped up by Chile.

-- Humala claimed the country's macro-economic growth has led to increased inequality and exclusion. He offered an alternative to the "neo-liberal" model that focused on building internal markets and promised growth for all, not just a few. He was particularly critical of the emphasis on exploitation of natural resources, which he said belong to the State, and said his government would review contracts of mining companies that were not paying royalties. Humala also said he would revise the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. (challenging Garcia to take a position on this issue, something the APRA leader ignored) and proposed returning to the 1979 Constitution through a Constitutional Assembly.

Social policy and anti-corruption:

-- Garcia said his priorities were to create jobs, improve education by increasing teacher salaries and instituting longer class days, improve health care, and provide affordable housing. Garcia called for a reduction in government salaries and for the money saved to be used for programs to end hunger and illiteracy, as well as to provide water for those without access. He pledged to fight narcotrafficking by controlling precursor chemicals.

-- Humala proposed increases in spending on child nutrition, water infrastructure, and police and doctor salaries. He also expressed strong support for labor rights.

Decentralization:

-- Both candidates were strong advocates of decentralization

and empowering the regions. Garcia called for increased delegation of fiscal management and decision making. He criticized President Toledo's approach to regionalization as insufficient and blamed the Ministry of Economy and Financing for blocking regional governments' infrastructure projects.

-- Humala said decentralization would help solve the education and unemployment problems. Humala called for a 50/50 split of resources between the regions and the central government and said he would eliminate the prefect and sub-prefect positions. Humala also took the notion of decentralization a step further by backing the creation of regional and municipal police forces.

Citizen security:

-- Garcia emphasized order and stability if elected, distinguishing himself from Humala as the candidate who supports a unitary National Police. Garcia proposed more police stations, more officers, increased sentences for repeat offenders, and the death penalty for child rapists. He also pledged to re-equip and strengthen the armed forces.

-- Humala tried to connect Garcia with the terrorist activity that increased during the latter's presidency. He proposed empowering mayors to set citizen security policy tailoring it as appropriate to local needs. Humala also distinguished himself from Garcia by proposing a greater role for local self-defense organizations (Garcia replied that informal vigilante groups smacked of Chavez- or Castro-style control mechanisms).

COMMENT: WHO WON?

18. (SBU) Neither candidate scored a clear knockout blow during the debate, which is not surprising given that they mostly talked past each other and to their separate target audiences. In polls taken in Lima the day after inquiring as to who performed better, Garcia came out ahead 57 to 22 percent in the Apoyo survey, and by 61.8-20.1 percent in a CPI poll. The Apoyo poll found that 10 percent have changed their voting intention, while CPI concluded that Garcia would gain slightly as a result of the debate. In sum, the two candidates offered few surprises and their 90 minute verbal

give-and-take probably will have only a marginal effect on the outcome of the election. END COMMENT.
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